

U.S. – COLOMBIA ACTION PLAN ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC EQUALITY



***“We do share the goals of expanding social inclusion and economic opportunity...
while preserving and strengthening our heritage of pluralism, tolerance, and diversity.”***

– Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

In January 2010, the United States and Colombia signed the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan on Racial and Ethnic Equality. The Action Plan recognizes the important contributions of African-descendent and indigenous peoples and seeks to elevate recognition of their cultures in both countries.

Plan Objectives

The Action Plan focuses on sharing best practices and implementing programs to address social barriers that affect Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. These barriers include lack of continuity, quality, access, and participation in education; low participation and representation in democratic institutions; limited opportunities in the labor market; structural racism; and multiple forms of discrimination.

Priority areas for Action Plan programs include:

- Greater access to education, employment, housing, cultural preservation, environmental protection, and democratic institutions.
- Increased recognition of their culture, traditional knowledge, and contributions to their respective societies.
- Integration of the histories of these communities as part of the national education curriculum.

Latest Developments

The Action Plan's Steering Group held its first meeting June 2, 2010, in Bogotá. U.S. and Colombian government representatives evaluated current assistance programs in Colombia for Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. The two governments agreed to establish working groups to discuss the make-up of the plenary group and an agenda for the first plenary session, to be held later this year.

The plenary group will incorporate representatives from both governments, civil society organizations, academia, and the

private sector to develop proposals for achieving the Action Plan's objectives.

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs launched its Race, Ethnicity, and Social Inclusion Unit in July 2010 to coordinate the implementation of the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan and similar initiatives in the region.

Programs

The U.S. government has developed new educational and cultural programming to support the Action Plan. Programs will include:

- English language scholarships for Afro-Colombian and indigenous high school and university students.
- Visiting U.S. experts to address topics including cultural entrepreneurship; the preservation of indigenous customs and languages; and diversity, ethnic identity, and anti-discrimination policies.
- Cultural exchanges to build people-to-people connections between minority artists in both countries.
- A media visibility project providing scholarships for Afro-Colombians and indigenous actors, directors, and technicians to apply for technical, university, or professional education in the performing arts.

The United States will continue to work with its Colombian partners to develop innovative program ideas. An outreach campaign will raise awareness of these new opportunities among the African-descendent and indigenous audiences in Colombia and the United States.

For more information, please go to U.S. Embassy Bogotá's Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/usdos.colombia> or the Embassy's webpage at <http://bogota.usembassy.gov/afrocolandindi.html>.